



Anthroposophic News Sheet

PUBLISHED BY THE GENERAL ANTHROPOSOPHIC SOCIETY, DORNACH, SWITZERLAND
FOR MEMBERS ONLY

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"Anthroposophic News Sheet" Goetheanum, Dornach, Switzerland.

Yearly subscription: 17.— Swiss Francs. - Single Copies: 33 cents.

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28th of December, 1941. No. 51/52

9th year.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SPIRITUAL BEING OF THE UNIVERSE.

Lecture by Dr. RUDOLF STEINER, delivered at The Hague on the
3rd of November, 1922.

(CONCLUSION)

If we are able not only to produce these images through corresponding meditations, but also to eliminate them at any time, thus giving rise to an empty consciousness, the spirit of the universe will enter it, just as the air enters our lungs. By using a less exact comparison I might say that the spirit of the universe enters our consciousness just as the colours enter our eye, or sounds enter the ear. This second comparison, however, would not be so exact. When we perceive physical objects in the physical world outside, these perceptions are less alive than that which we experience through an empty consciousness. We feel that the spirit of the universe penetrates into our consciousness, and we experience this strongly and vividly, whereas we experience our breathing process unconsciously. Yet the breathing process is a living one, for it does not have the shadowy character of sound or colour-perceptions. When we rise to the stage of an exact clairvoyance, as described, we have direct spiritual experiences, and this is just as living a process as our breathing process.

This experience in itself would, however, leave us standing half way. We would perceive images, and if we can eliminate them, as described, we would be aware of a spiritual life round about us, weaving through the universe. Yet this would only be a general kind of experience. For, strange though it may sound, these things are not perceived in the same way in which we perceive physical things in the physical world, so that now we do not say: "We are here, and the objects are outside us"; we feel, instead, that we are not separated from the world, but that we live within the whole world. We have poured our own life, as it were, over the whole world, and feel united with it. We have left our body and have awakened to life, as it were, outside our body, as a soul-spiritual being, and now we feel that we are one with the whole universe. Once we contemplated it from outside,

*) From stenographic notes, unrevised by the lecturer.

...now we experience it inwardly, in the same way in which we ordinarily experience our blood, or the organic activities beneath our skin. Our consciousness has changed from a personal into a cosmic consciousness.

The spirit of the universe can only be felt if we experience it inwardly. You see, in the ordinary physical world, our ordinary consciousness gives us problems of knowledge. As a rule, these problems are connected with the search after an inner knowledge of things, the knowledge of their inner essence. We realise that we only see the surface of things and we wish to penetrate into their inner being. Natural scientists explain this inner essence of things as the effect of atoms, and others explain it in other ways. But they all wish to penetrate into the inner being of things. Or else they construct theories which prove that such a knowledge is beyond human possibilities. In any case, we feel that we are outside the objects, yet the cognitive force within us awakens the desire to penetrate into these external objects, for we feel that their true essence can only be grasped if we penetrate into their inner being.

When we live, as described, within the Spirit of the Universe and are outside the body, knowledge becomes something quite different from ordinary knowledge. To begin with, we have nothing but images, and it would be foolish to think that this knowledge can be gained in any other way. Of course, these images are the picture of a spiritual world, but they are nothing but images. If we succeed in eliminating them, so as to produce an empty consciousness, we feel that we live in a spiritual world. Just as in the ordinary world we do not see lungs, stomach or heart, even so we do not see the spirit of the universe which we now experience in a cosmic state of consciousness. We feel as if it were our own inner being. At first, we cannot see it, but we know that it lives within us. In the physical world, the cognitive process awakens the desire to penetrate into the inner essence of things. Now the very opposite takes place, for we wish to get rid of things, we wish to separate ourselves from them and to change them back into images.

We have learned to produce images with the inner weaving character of thoughts and yet endowed with life. With our experience we wish to penetrate into this complex of images; in the form of images, we wish to take hold of that which first lives in our consciousness cosmically. Now we wish to push things out into the world. In the physical world, the things came into us in the form of perceptions through the cognitive process, but now we wish to drive out the images which live in us, so that a world of images, of imaginations now surrounds us. In the physical world, the cognitive process consists first of all in an inner thought-process and then we approach the objects. We take them in. In the supersensible world the cognitive process takes a different course: First of all, we have the objects within us and then we seek their image outside. We try to see the world as the image of what we have within us.

We do not reach this stage unless we train our will, as

described, for instance through that will-exercise in which we think backwards (i.e. from the end to the beginning) instead of forwards (i.e. from the beginning to the end) as we do in ordinary life. We may, for instance, think backwards the events of a day, by going through them from the evening to the morning. This will-exercise tears our thought away from the external reality. A severe discipline of the will also consists in adding new habits to those which we already have, or in tearing ourselves away from old habits and in acquiring new ones. During our life's course, we thus succeed in doing something that life itself generally does; namely, we transform ourselves, become different human beings, take control of ourselves through self-education and apply ourselves to this task with the greatest inner energy.

In the books already mentioned to you, you will find the description of these exercises. Now I only wish to indicate the following: Through meditation, we school our thinking, so that our soul-spiritual part is able to live outside thought. But also the will can be schooled, and through this training of the will we pass through another experience. Without it, we cannot rise to the spiritual worlds nor experience them in an imaginative, objective way. At a certain stage of this training of the will, we see ~~that~~ our life ~~is~~ entirely submerged in deepest grief, pain, want, sorrow and care. I am using these words in order to describe approximately the condition through which we must pass if we wish to attain knowledge of the spirit; we must pass through it, just because we are modern men, who can no longer depend upon a Guru, as in olden times. Grief, care, pain and sorrow signify the complete separation from the physical body. During our physical life, we have a feeling of well-being only because our soul-spiritual part is submerged in the physical body during our waking life, and when we are asleep we are spared every night from feeling pain and from having to bear a sleep filled with suffering through the fact that our consciousness is extinguished. Now we consciously rise beyond our ordinary consciousness to a higher form of knowledge and by activating not only our thought, but also our will outside our body, deepest pain awakens in our soul-spiritual being. We feel through our inner experience that we miss our body. We do not only lose that sense of well-being, arising only through the soul's permeation with the body, but we also lose egoistic, bodily inclinations. Through the exercises which we make, we gradually become less and less selfish. Love must be developed even in meditation, and love blots out egoism. It would otherwise be impossible to reach these imaginative experiences outside the body. But at the same time, we dive into experiences of pain. Even in ordinary life we find that those who have not only reached a dry, indifferent kind of knowledge, but one that is inwardly connected with the human being, will say, if they are quite honest: "I am grateful for my good fortune in life, yet only my sufferings have brought me the knowledge I have." Consequently an infinite sorrow must first spread over the foundation of that consciousness which we have outside the body, when the external spiritual world penetrates into the emptied consciousness, so that we may acquire the strength to set before us objectively, in perfect images, the true spirit of the universe.

When we thus face the spirit of the Universe, contemplating it in pictures, something arises in our consciousness which has awakened outside the body, something that I would like to compare with our ordinary memory, except that it is far mightier and greater and of an entirely different kind. During our ordinary life we remember in thoughts the experiences through which we have passed. Ten years ago we may have passed through this or that experience; now we pass through it in memory, we draw it out of our memory, and it lives in us in an inwardly psychic form. But when we rise to the state of consciousness outside the body and contemplate the world as described, this contemplation contains something which I might designate as a kind of memory, that is to say, the memory of what we ourselves are in the physical world. Of course, we have perfect presence of mind while we are doing this, we can behave like the calmest person in the physical world, yet at the same time our body becomes an image in this world of images, and also the objects of the physical world, minerals, plants, animals, the physical shapes of men, all these become images for us. The world in which we lived when we were merely conscious of physical things, now appears to us like a cosmic memory within this world of images. And the fact that in the physical world we perceived the sun, now enables us to find our way about in this world of images. But in the spiritual world, which we entered in the manner described, we experience something else: We perceive spiritual Beings, endowed with an inner life, which does not resemble that of man, who has an external physical body, for these soul-spiritual, divine-spiritual Beings that we now see are not embodied in the physical world. We perceive them in such a way as to connect this new experience with an old one. Just as our memory may connect something with an experience of seven or eight years ago, even so we now connect our new experience in the spiritual world with the physical perception of the sun here on earth. This physical experience, the perception of the physical sun, stands out like a memory among the images which we now see, and this memory enables us to know that the sun is the external image of divine-spiritual Beings, even as our body is the external image of our soul. We now perceive what forces are active behind the sun, and we know that these forces are spiritual Beings. This may sound absurd to a modern man, yet it is not more absurd or fantastic than the conclusions arrived at through the electron-theory, or magnetism. We should be clear as to the way in which a spiritual investigator reaches his results, and then they will no longer seem fantastic, but just as exact and objective as a mathematical-scientific investigation leading to natural-scientific results. Real processes can be experienced within these memories connected with the physical world, and the contemplation of the soul-spiritual, divine-spiritual Beings corresponding to these processes.

Let us observe, for instance, the soul-spiritual Beings that appear, as it were, behind the sun, that reveal themselves as the sun's soul-spiritual essence, as the Spirit of the Sun.

When we have proceeded thus far in our knowledge of the spiritual being of the universe, we reach the point (last Tuesday I already spoke to you of this aspect of knowledge) of remembering not

only our life since our birth, or a short time after, but we also learn to look back into our pre-natal existence, when we lived as soul-spiritual beings in a soul-spiritual world, free from the body and the experiences derived from it.

Just as here on earth we face the external physical sun, so we lived in a spiritual world, during our pre-earthly existence, connected with that which spiritually corresponds to the physical light of the sun. Just as the sun's rays fall down upon us here on earth, even so the divine Beings of the Sun, with whom we were united during our pre-earthly life, joined their own forces with ours, without shining down upon us with a physical light, thus enfolding our soul-spiritual being with the spiritual forces of the sun. At a certain moment of our embryonic life (this is what we now perceive), we descend from our pre-earthly, purely soul-spiritual existence and unite ourselves with the physical human body coming to us through father and mother. With our physical body we unite that which we experienced under the influence of the Sun-Beings. We dive down into this physical body and fill it with soul and spirit. The former sun-influences within us become the etheric body, filling us with life. It lives within us as a fine, transparent body and it stimulates our capacity of perceiving the physical light of the sun, kindling it in our power of vision, so that we can see the colours through it.

In short, by learning to know the Spirit of the Universe we learn to know our own existence within this spiritual essence of the universe, and we look beyond birth or conception into our eternal, that is to say, into our spiritual existence, which reveals itself as an everlasting spiritual essence. Now we know that when we lived in the spiritual counterpart of the physical light of the sun, we took over into us that part which fills our physical body with life, during our physical existence, and permeates it with activity.

In the spiritual world, we prepared our earthly life and took into us the spiritual light of the sun, just as here on earth we take in the physical light of the sun. We ourselves gave rise to our earthly life and it is a mistake to believe that the soul-spiritual within us is merely the result of our earthly existence. Thus real knowledge gradually enables us to penetrate into the Spirit of the Universe.

Let us take another example. In the manner described above, we also learn to know the Moon Beings behind the physical moon. We perceive them in the same way in which we perceived the spiritual essence behind the physical sun. These Moon Beings appear to us as the goal towards which we were striving while developing the will. We can set before us in pictures the experiences arrived at through the forces of the Sun. Now the spiritual Beings, belonging to the spiritual world, whose image may be found in the physical moon and in the moon's activities and influences in space, enable us, even before birth or conception, to experience not only that which constitutes our spiritual environment, but something more. Through our eyes we do not only take in the physical light of the sun, but also that which lives in the power contained in the sun's light, and this enables us to experience

in an indistinct way the Spirit of the Universe. To the Spiritual forces of the Moon we owe it that we can reproduce in images that which we experience as our inner cosmic being, and these Moon-forces bring us down, again and again, into our physical existence on earth.

The human being thus experiences the spiritual counter-images of that which rays out of the sun, the moon and the stars, in an external, physical way. An exact clairvoyance and that development of the will, which may be designated as an ideal magic (in order to distinguish it from the charlatanry which makes itself so conspicuous to-day and with which it is so frequently confused), and what might also be called the development of thinking on the one hand, leading to an exact clairvoyance, and the development of the will on the other hand, leading to the most ideal form of magic, these guide us to a knowledge of the Spirit of the Universe, to a knowledge which is, to begin with, not religious, but scientific. Within that part of our being, in which we live unconsciously every night, from the moment of falling asleep to the moment of waking up, we thus learn to know the seed of that which passes through the portal of death, when we cross its threshold. Through the fact that our physical body belongs to the amoral Nature, we learn to know ourselves such as we are outside the body, during sleep; we then recognise ourselves not as the embodiment, but as the "ensoulment", as the spiritual embodiment, as it were, of our moral value in the world, of the religious feelings which live in us in the face of the soul-spiritual permeating the world. When we live in our physical body, our soul-spiritual being is imprisoned as in a dark cell within the world of Nature. But if the experiences which we have during sleep, as soul-spiritual beings outside the body, become transparent to us, we perceive in them all our moral actions, they contain our moral value, our moral essence, which goes with us through the portal of death. By learning to know the Spirit of the Universe in the manner described, we also learn to know that everything which we perceive physically shall one day disappear in the death through heat (modern physics teach this even to-day). Everything material and external is perishable. But what we acquire as a spiritual seed, which is unconscious during sleep, but conscious during exact clairvoyance, survives everything; it survives all the minerals, plants, animals, stars, clouds, etc. which we see round about us. This constitutes the seed for a new world of the future.

We learn to know the reality, the real objective power of moral life. By recognising the relationship of our soul-spiritual being with our moral quality, we learn to know the seed of future worlds embedded in the present world; we learn to know this in the same way in which a botanist recognises next year's plant in the seed of to-day's plant. What does that mean? It means that through our moral and religious life we prepare future worlds, which will exist when the present worlds have vanished. A feeling of deepest responsibility thus enters our soul, for we know that our moral actions and all that we develop morally really constitute the seed of future worlds, though to-day they may still be subjected to abstract human judgments.

And by learning to know our own immortality, that is to say,

that part of our being which is able to live outside the body during sleep and which passes through the portal of death, in order to live in a spiritual environment, in a spiritual world, during the post-mortem existence, even as it led a real pre-earthly existence, - by learning to know our own immortality, we learn to know the immortality of the world and that the present world is the hardened, condensed spiritual world of an earlier age. We know then, that the soul-spiritual seed of man, which will form new worlds, develops within the physical human being, produced by Nature - we know this, as we look upon the hardened world which now constitutes Nature.

Through the above-mentioned exercises - and not by being dependent upon a Guru, as in ancient times - modern men may reach a real knowledge of the Spirit of the Universe. As already indicated, and as explained thirty years ago in my "Philosophy of Spiritual Activity", the point of issue is to recognise the true nature of moral life in man how this moral life, which is the most individual part of human nature, penetrates into pure thought, as the soul-spiritual, fully conscious human being.

If we develop the moral method described in my "Philosophy of Spiritual Activity", in order to recognise the Spirit of the Universe, the exact clairvoyance thus gained will become an idealistic magic enabling us to penetrate into the spirit of the Universe and consequently also into the eternal kernel of man's being. Parenthetically I may remark that this also entails a knowledge of the repeated lives on earth. When we are able to look into our pre-natal existence, we gain this knowledge of the repeated lives on earth. For this insight shows us how in the pre-earthly existence we live and weave as soul-spiritual men, just as here on earth we live as physical men in the midst of the phenomena of Nature. We also discover that we brought this life along with us from a former existence upon the earth and that we shall carry it through death in future lives on earth. This can be reached through an exact clairvoyance, through an idealistic magic.

At first this knowledge is a purely scientific one, the spiritual continuation of what has been acquired through the power of natural-scientific thought. But gradually we rise to a religious feeling. Before I conclude my lecture, let me describe this to you briefly, in connection with that mighty Mystery enacted upon Golgotha, when human life on earth was permeated with the Christ Impulse.

If we approach the Mystery of Golgotha with the knowledge of the Spirit of the Universe concerning which I spoke to you today, we realise that when we look back into the epochs preceding the Mystery of Golgotha, the knowledge of the supersensible worlds was obtained in the manner described at the beginning of my lecture, namely through the Chela's living connection with his Guru. The religions of the present are in reality mere traditional remnants of the teachings which the pupils of olden times obtained from the Guru.

How did people look into the spiritual world in the times

before the Mystery of Golgotha? Even in those times they saw Nature, but they did not develop a real science of Nature. When they sought after knowledge, they simply went to a Guru. The Guru led them back to the primordial ages of the earth's development, when divine-spiritual beings were the teachers of the first Gurus. The Gurus of later epochs acquired these teachings in order to transmit them to their pupils. These teachings spoke of primordial ages, in which earthly life and spiritual life were not severed in so marked a way as in later epochs. Men felt that if they lived only in accordance with Nature, they forsook the spiritual Being of the Universe. They contemplated moral life and said to themselves: Through a natural development we have become what we are now. Nature itself, living within us, has fallen away from the Divine-Spiritual. The holy Gurus must lead us back to the Nature of former times, which revealed not only natural influences, but which was permeated with moral impulses. If we look back into the oldest epochs, we find in them a Nature which is not only an amoral Nature, but permeated throughout with spirituality. Man's religious feelings turned towards this Spirit in Nature, not in faith, but in full knowledge.

Through that older form of knowledge, which was, as already described, a dreamy kind of clairvoyance, men could also perceive their pre-earthly existence. And because in the times long before the Mystery of Golgotha (the times immediately preceding it, had lost this, for the older knowledge had died out) the human beings had in them something which they experienced in the same way in which we ordinarily experience Nature, they were able to feel something which rose out of their inner being and they knew that this came from their pre-earthly existence. Because they possessed this knowledge, they were able to have such a deep confidence in the Guru. And the Guru told them: Now you have been transferred into the earthly, physical world, but through death you will once more enter the spiritual world. Here on earth you live in a world which has fallen away from the Spirit, but beyond you will encounter, above everything else, that Being whose physical counter-image is the Sun. This Being will become your guide, it will give you the power of Light, for without it you are spiritually dead in that other world.

When the Mystery of Golgotha was enacted upon the earth, there still existed some traces of this primordial wisdom. The Christ Impulse and the Mystery of Golgotha was viewed in the light of this primordial wisdom, during the first centuries of the Christian era. People then said: The Being who once lived only in the spiritual world, who led man into the physical world and who once more takes over the guidance of man after death, this spiritual Being has now come down to the earth and has taken up His abode in the body of the man, Jesus of Nazareth. And those who were ~~still~~ ancient initiates in the Mysteries still existing at the time of the Mystery of Golgotha said concerning Him, to whom men had looked up in the times of the ancient Mystery-wisdom as the high Sun-Being, the divine-spiritual counter-image of the physical sun, man's guide through all his deaths and lives - they said concerning this high Being: He has come down to the earth. This divine-spiritual Being came down to the earth,

This divine-spiritual Being descended to the earth, because man had become so earthly that he could no longer find a connection with the divine-spiritual which lived at the beginning of the earth. This divine-spiritual Being took on a body of flesh and has remained connected with the earth. In accordance with St. Paul's words, "Not I, but Christ in me", we can now permeate our Ego-consciousness, the consciousness of freedom which we are able to develop through the physical body, with our religious feeling for the Christ, who passed through the Mystery of Golgotha in the body of Jesus of Nazareth. Through the force which we gain in this relationship with Christ, in this inner, religious experience of Christ, we may find, even after death, the Guide whom we once found in the manner described above.

In the early Christian times one therefore spoke of Christ the Guide, who came down to the physical world. This knowledge gradually disappeared, indeed the old initiation-wisdom and the Yoga wisdom in general ceased altogether, and the situation which we must now face is to find, as described, an insight into the spiritual world through the natural-scientific mentality. We face the world with our moral consciousness. We face it and feel the need of finding the spiritual world. But we are also able to know the following: The ancients said that this world has fallen away from the divine spiritual; it has become sinful in man and Nature has lost its moral quality, yet we know that MORAL INTUITION penetrates, with the consciousness of freedom, into the thought of individual man, and it penetrates into his thought in an individual way. We strive towards the spiritual world and rise to a knowledge of the spiritual world. Just as the ancients knew that the Gods had sent them down to the earth, dismissing them, as it were, even so we know that man's power of freedom, which he develops through his life on earth, once more enables him to find his connection with the divine-spiritual worlds.

In the past, men looked upon the earth as having fallen away from the divine-spiritual. We contemplate the earth and hope that in future we shall find the Gods again through human freedom. We know that they live, as described, behind the Sun and the Moon as counter-images. And we contemplate the Mystery of Golgotha and say with St. Paul: Not I, but the Christ-Impulse gives us the strength to set to work earnestly. For the earth which has lost its divine character has once more become divine through the fact that Christ lives in it, because he passed through the Mystery of Golgotha. By raising our glance to the supersensible worlds, we once more gain the certainty that the Christ-Being will be our helper in future, in those times to come, in which we shall have to form realities through our spiritual essence.

Spiritual knowledge, as it is meant here, thus guides us back again from the mere knowledge of Nature to a moral consciousness, to a religious consciousness.

My dear friends, the effect of these things upon our

civilisation, and their significance for practical modern life, will form the subject of a third lecture, which I shall deliver to-morrow under the title: "The Moral and Religious Education from the Standpoint of Anthroposophy". To-day I only wished to show that the things which were once said concerning the super-sensible world through a primordial human wisdom, must now be said again to modern man in a new form. These truths must be proclaimed in such a way that modern man may not become weak and dependent upon a Guru, that in meeting all the requirements of modern civilisation, he may rely upon the strong forces of his own individuality, and once more enter those spheres where it is possible to gain a knowledge of the spiritual being of the universe. Man must have the courage to accept what a modern spiritual investigator can give him. Just as modern men accept the astronomical, biological and physical truths, even so our time demands that the spiritual-scientific truths be incorporated with our culture and the life of our civilisation. For these spiritual-scientific truths are acquired through the strong power of thought. It is a thought through which we no longer contemplate the world passively, but which gives us virtues: Self-discipline, self-training of the will to the point of overcoming every form of egoism, and of uniting ourselves in love with the whole world, for without this love we cannot acquire a universal knowledge of the world.

The numerous signs of decay which we observe to-day (I already pointed this out to you) and that which prevents us from having a clear survey of things in the physical world, can only be healed through the spirit, through the soul. Our culture, our civilisation have ended in a blind alley because we lack the power of thinking leading to a living experience, we lack the power of will able to pierce the darkness of external sensory existence. If we can see through this physical existence with the aid of thoughts which have become alive, so that wherever we are, we feel our comradeship with the spiritual world (this is possible through a modern anthroposophical spiritual science) we take into our human consciousness that strong power of thought, that light-filled power of the will, which are alone able to unfold, as every unprejudiced person well knows, that which humanity needs, in order to attain forces of resurrection and of reconstruction, leading us out of the present into the future. For it must be evident to all that merely external institutions can never bring these forces of reconstruction into our civilisation,

Those who recognise this truth, should feel inclined to turn their gaze towards those who attempt to kindle these forces through the spirit and the soul, and not through external means. If these new forces can be kindled, then we may gain courage, strength and confidence, so that we may pass over in the right way from this present time with its difficult trials into a future, which will also have its sorrows, which will not be a happy one for humanity, but in which the human beings will bear joy and sorrow in such a way that the human race may worthily progress with the whole evolution of mankind and of the earth to future ages.

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